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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS

Division of Program Surveys . . . Washington, D. C.

SIX FARMERS  
TALK ABOUT  
THE WHEAT SITUATION

Sample Interviews from  
a Survey of Wheat Growers



STUDY 121-II • AUGUST 1945 • FOR ADMINISTRATIVE USE ONLY

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HOW WELL INFORMED are American farmers about the wheat situation? Do they know that the Government is committed to supporting the price of wheat at 90 percent of parity for two years after the war? Do they expect a wheat surplus? If so, do they think the Government should do something about it?

To answer these questions, the Division of Program Surveys has recently conducted a survey of the major wheat-producing regions of the country, interviewing 671 farmers, a representative sample of wheat growers in the hard-winter-wheat states, the spring-wheat states, and the Corn Belt. A preliminary report of the findings in the first two areas was issued on July 31, 1945. A more comprehensive report, covering all three areas, will be issued shortly.

To acquaint the reader somewhat with the method of interviewing used in the survey, and with the way in which farmers respond to the method, six interviews are here presented as they were recorded by interviewers. They are not intended to represent the average or most frequent kinds of interviews or respondents. They are meant simply to show the kind of material from which the percentage figures in the reports are calculated.

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1. A SMALL WHEAT FARMER IN KANSAS

"Let me tell you, supply-and-demand has kept the country in debt!...We had a demonstration of it in the fore part of the thirties...It was times we never saw a dollar for six months!"

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THIS INTERVIEW was with a farmer in Thomas County, Kansas, owner and operator of 160 acres. He gave his total cash farm income for 1944 as \$2,000, of which \$1,300 was from wheat. This man's formal education consists of a few years of grammar school.

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How does the wheat situation for after the war look to you? In general, do you think it will be good or bad?

We'll take 75 cents for it unless the Government sets the price and holds it. Depends on how soon the other countries will get to producing. Due to have some bad years, and ain't going to make money on wheat. One thing, we're going to have to buy machinery cheaper and produce cheaper.

Do you think the Government should do anything to support wheat prices after the war?

Bet your life. It won't be worth as many dollars in ten years as it is today. I'm for the Government setting the price and controlling the acres. There has got to be both. Couldn't guarantee a certain price and have everyone cultivate all the land into wheat. Got to control acres or be all stocked up. I want something for what I got to sell, and if the Government don't stay back of it speculators and mills now would be buying it under a dollar.

Do you think the Government should continue to support wheat prices indefinitely after the war, or should it gradually reduce support prices and eventually let supply and demand set the price of wheat?

I say indefinitely.



Why do you think so?

A farmer don't mind working to produce a good crop, but he does hate to have buyers knock it down. Don't want to see it set way too high. I think in peacetime that \$1.61 is too high for wheat. If we can get 80 cents to a dollar for it, say \$1.22 for top wheat at Kansas City, a man can raise it for that, except with machinery prices unreasonable. The Government allows machinery companies to charge a certain price for a certain amount and that's all right and there should be a law we get 100 cents on a dollar.

Do you think that such a gradual reduction on support prices for wheat would be good or bad for the country as a whole?

Bad! Supply and demand--let me tell you, supply and demand has kept the country in debt! I don't mean the Government, but all the people in the country. Every time we come up to a big crop the supply was bigger than the demand, and we make nothing on it. That wheat is worth the same, year round and year to year. Only one class of people makes any money out of supply and demand and that's the processors. If I knew I was going to get a dollar for wheat, I'd put a carpenter to work, and maybe a cement mixer. I want to fix up my place like a home, and so does others. It would create three times the labor then. But when the price is uncertain, everything comes to a standstill, because the farmer wouldn't know where he was at. They depend on the farmer for everything--the whole damn thing. If he isn't stabilized, the whole structure goes to pieces. We had a demonstration of that in the fore part of the thirties. We'll see them times again if we don't try to stabilize things, because we're going to see droughts and all that.

If we're going to get it stabilized, it's going to take money, but who is in a better position to pay than the man producing what he knows he gets a dollar for? He's willing to spend his money and keep things going, and the Government wouldn't have to pay out much of anything. Just have to stabilize the price, and people would improve their farms and buy more machinery, and keep things going.

I could tell you how it was when we lived down on the highway in the thirties. Whole families comin' through there walking on shoes that was worn through. Mothers with babies in their arms walking out to Boulder Dam. Why? Because their men was out there to get jobs. And there was five men out there to every job. We had a couple of cows I managed to keep back. It was sell one to pay this and sell another to pay that, and just a couple held on to in spite of everything, and we'd have that milk, and eggs from a few chickens, and get hold of some flour somehow. I worked a little bit in the cream station, but it was times we never saw a dollar for six months! And I used to go



down to the dump and find old rags of overalls, you know where they don't wear out so much back of the knees, my wife would take pieces from there and put them together for overalls for the boys.

That's where supply and demand gets. I don't believe in it at all. All right for a man that's a multi-millionaire, but we're talking of the common run of people. Rank and file are not in a position to hold out for prices. Lots think we should get back to that rut, but I want to progress. Can't improve my place and make it a home unless I'm sure I can pay for it. The minute the jam comes, the labor man is hit first and don't buy no more, and he's the best buyer we got today. He goes in and pays a dollar and eats a good hearty dinner--spends his money confident. You watch a rich man--he just goes in and buys maybe a glass of milk and a toasty cheese sandwich.

Suppose that, after they took the price support away, wheat went down to 90 cents and the prices of things farmers buy and farm wages stayed about the same as they are now. What do you think would happen to the amount of wheat produced in the United States?

Don't know. It amounts to history for this country to keep producing crops. Someone would be putting it in; I'm not saying it would be the same men.

Why do you think so?

That's not so low someone couldn't go ahead with it.

What would you do if the price of wheat went to 90 cents and the prices of things you buy and farm wages stayed about where they are now?

My land I'd keep the same.

How could you reduce the cost of producing wheat on your farm so that you could raise it for 90 cents a bushel?

This farmer and that farmer could buy machinery together and work together and reduce the cost of machinery and labor you have to hire.

Is there anything the Government should do to help you reduce your cost of production?

Yes, there is, and I'll tell you what. Make that tractor that sells for \$1,700 sell for \$900, like it does in Russia. They get it over there, and all for \$900, and probably make something on it at that.



They could really cut the thing down. Got to pull broader implements to make fewer trips around the field and save gas and time.

We've been talking about what may happen after the war. Now we are interested in finding out how farmers think the wheat situation looks for the first two years immediately following the war. As far as you know, is the Government going to do anything to try to support wheat prices in the first two years after the war?

I understand they're going to stabilize prices for two years after the war. I don't know what that's going to be, but we can't do it and not control acres. Lot of opposition to government control, but I think we'll see more than ever. If we don't, be just a few farms and the rest hogged out. Big places will just furnish jobs three to four months a year, and people have charity the rest of the year. But I think the Government will get tired of this dole, and the day of big money is over. In paying for this thing, they're going to have to tax, and the man that has to pay them is the man with income, but it's all right if they have incomes.

Where are they going to support it?

I understand 90 percent of parity. That parity business I don't understand. I think that 1912 to 1918--we sold wheat anywhere from 65 cents to \$1.75 in that time--do they take a medium in there? We know where wheat would have went with demand if the Government hadn't set it to keep down inflation. That's all right. I've got a brother in the south part of the county with \$42,000 in government bonds, even at that, from his wheat. I didn't want to see inflation come because we have to drop back so far. Going to have to drop back some, but we don't want to see it drop below a dollar. Power machinery is here to stay, and we can raise wheat for a buck.

Does that mean that wheat prices will stay where they are now?

Won't stay there. May hold up there the same for two years after the war while other countries need it over there.

Will they stay there even if the prices of the things you buy go down?

Other prices won't go down if commodities is all set the same. No farmer will give just a dollar for help a day when he knows wheat will bring a dollar. Let's don't go way back and think about days way past. Let's stay with times like we got them now. Hold it at that proposition, or let it all go back a little, not below dollar wheat. Set the price.



The law is that wheat prices must be held to at least 90 percent of parity for two years after the end of the war. This doesn't mean any set price guarantee but the Government will try not to let wheat prices go down any more than other prices. Acreage restrictions are not mentioned in this law. What do you think of this law? Do you think it is going to be good or bad for farmers?

I'm afraid that's not going to do us a great lot of good.

Why do you think so?

Going to make every GI Joe eager and anxious to go in debt to farm, which everyone has to do to start out. The Veterans Administration guarantees them up to \$2,000 debt. But I'm afraid by the time GI Joe gets his loan through and spends his savings he's making now, and they take what he buys with his savings as security on the \$2,000 GI loan--then the props will go out from under everything and it's going to be pretty bad. That guaranteed price will cause a lot to go in debt, and when the crash comes at the end of two years if they don't extend it on indefinitely, be too many will just have their all taken away from them and the big men will have it all.

What do you think would have happened to wheat prices in the first two years after the war if they hadn't passed this law?

If they didn't have it, at harvest time when people take their wheat to town, they'd get the price so damn cheap be unbearable. The fellow financially fixed would hang on and break in on all the other fellows. Be just like a poker game. GI Joe would have debts and have to sell at harvest time and be sold out. That's the supply and demand game. If a hog's worth \$9.20 then it's worth it whenever he's ready for market. Any time you sell a finished product should be worth as much any other time you sell it. If it is the farmer will be in a position to keep his produce sifting into the market along with consumer demand. But when the farmer gets nothing for what he's got, the roads are filled with people looking for jobs.

What effect do you think this law will have on the amount of wheat that will be produced in the United States for the two years after the war?

I think we've kind of got people educated a little. Got 'em to come to this summer tilling. Three times better wheat. Won't go to any excess limit in acreage. But they may too. This support price may lead them to do it, if other prices (farm prices) don't stay in line. But if other prices are in line too, production will be balanced the way it is now.







What do you think the demand in this country will be like?

Depends what we do with GI Joe, and he's got to have a job and get to eat and if he has a job it will be a good paying proposition. Our demand will be just as good. I think they're going to see he has a job. But when he's out of a job, food rots all around. Nothing rings the cash register except money.

Looking at the whole picture for wheat, the production and demand sides--do you think there will be a surplus produced in the period that this law is in effect--that is, the first two years after the war?

Only thing is, if a man goes straight to wheat if wheat's all he's got and slams into it for two years and then gets out and quits, might get a big surplus. If that law isn't set out longer that's what will happen.

Suppose surplus wheat is produced in this period, do you think the Government should try to do something about it or not?

Yes. Pay a bonus for summer till and it might have a tendency to hold wild wheat farming. If the Government says we're going to support prices up to our consumption and then put men on a quota basis that will be supported, and says the man that raises more has to take care of it himself and not dump it on the Government. If there's 20 percent of my wheat I raise over, I can't dump it on government hands, but I have to provide a place to put it, and I'd be able to hold it because my quota crop would be supported. Make or lose on the rest of it. Let us take that on our own shoulders.

If the Government does try to do something about a surplus of wheat, it could take measures to hold down production so that no more wheat would be produced than could be used. What do you think of this?

Include a decreased production by setting a steady price on corn, sorghums, other things. Far as coming out and telling a man on your farm you can only produce so many acres of wheat, I don't think they should do that. But just support a certain percent of each man's crop and let the man look out for himself on any more.

Another way would be to have no cutback on production and, if there is a surplus, buy it up at a support price and dispose of it in whatever ways they could. What do you think of this?

Always a drain on the Treasury. People are always ready to gouge the Government. Pull two sets of books and howl for more money and charge the Government too much to hold it in storage. Government shouldn't have to hold any over what it will agree to support--a

quota for each place to fit home consumption. They can induce reduction if they make every man hold his own surplus wheat, and it won't be any drain on the Government. Lot of these men that never come out here won't want to produce wheat they have to hold back on their own land. But a farmer that's living on his own place can do that and have some to make up his quota in a short year.

If the Government buys surplus wheat, what do you think they should do with this wheat?

Government would have to find foreign markets for it, or maybe have to hold it for a year when we were way short. They should hold enough for one year if not a bushel is produced.

What do you think of the idea of the Government selling it below cost for feed to farmers in parts of the country where they are short of feed?

No use of the Government losing money on it in the world. Hold it before that and get the production cut down. They can do it by support.

What do you think of the idea of asking farmers in all areas of the country to cut their wheat acreage by a certain percent?

Be 50 percent raise hell because the Government was telling them what to do. Smoothest way is to support home consumption on a quota basis. Best deal is to get along with them. Can't make that other thing work with people screaming about being told what to do. Induce them to cut rather than put the whole acreage out and a whole lot of it not supported. Be a guard against drought years, and a farmer would have wheat in the bin. Then a man can do as he damn pleases with his own farm and the chances are most won't put out more than the quota supported, and so wheat production would be cut.

Would you be willing to cut your wheat acreage by one-fourth in order to get the price which this 90 percent of parity law guarantees?

Yes, but I believe the other way is better.

If the Government paid farmers to put part of their wheat acreage into grass or feed crops, do you think this would decrease wheat production?

Why not?



Rank and file of farmers want to be busy in the warm part of the year. They won't dig every day of the year. Don't want nothing like that that would make them work the year round, and nothing to put on grass anyway. Too many suitcase farmers for that. Support the price up to home consumption for him and he can govern his own self. He's got no storage out on his land, and if he wants to be fool enough to overproduce, he'll have to take care of his own.

What do you think of this way?

Won't work. No use to try to get back to grass that way. Man that owns land and is non-resident ain't got no business with grass. Couldn't induce hardly any to do that.

## 2. A TENANT FARMER IN KANSAS

"The farmer, he's an individualist. He likes to do his own running. But we'd just raise too much wheat....You pretty near have to have government control."

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THIS FARMER, a renter in Clark County, Kansas, had a hundred acres in wheat in 1944, from which his income was \$1,100. He gave his total cash farm income as \$2,000. He has had some college education.

How does the wheat situation for after the war look to you? In general, do you think it will be good or bad?

It don't look too good. Won't be no alcohol made out of it. As far as the market goes, there won't be any. Argentina and Australia and all those countries--they'll use the market. Oh, it might last good for a year, but won't be long, because Britain has already re-conversioned to peacetime.

Do you think the Government should do anything to support wheat prices after the war?

That's just taking it out of one pocket to put it in another, as far as I see it. Just means more taxes and more borrowing! But if they're gonna do that, I just think they got to control the acres too. If they don't, the big men will get bigger and they'll cut land right out from under us little guys--more machinery, too. It's these land grabbers that the Government has to do something about. If they want to support the price that way it might be all right. Might be all right that way. It'd give us a firm base to be on.

As you know the Government has been supporting wheat prices. What would you think of the Government gradually reducing this support and eventually letting supply and demand set the price of wheat?

That supply-and-demand idea, it worked all right in the horse days, but now with this machinery it don't do so good. Right around here there's too many vacant farms. What's really hurt is plowing up



all this good grass land. It's set us off our balance. Too many big farmers now. Western Kansas, they farm six to ten sections. Now a small farmer, if he's gonna stand up to that, he's got to be diversified. (Well, now what do you think about this question of gradually reducing the support and letting supply and demand set the price?) I like the idea of getting rid of the supports, because I don't think they're any solution, but I don't think supply and demand is right because the small farmer is out on that system.

Why do you think so?

When a man farms ten sections he can make a good profit on a low price, and he buys more machinery, and pretty soon he owns the whole damn county. That's just what I think, but I've seen it happen. (Now why not have the supports?) Well, what happens? The big guy makes even more profit that way, and he still pushes us off. That's why I say the small farmer has to diversify. Just don't get up against these wheat fellas at all.

Do you think that such a gradual reduction on support prices for wheat would be good or bad for the country as a whole?

It'd be bad. Run all the small farmers out, and where'd we go? To the cities. They got enough on relief, as I see it.

Suppose that, after they took the price support away, wheat went down to 90 cents and the prices of things farmers buy and farm wages stayed about the same as they are now. What do you think would happen to the amount of wheat produced in the United States?

There'd be no cut in the West. Might be some in the East where they just went to raising wheat. They can change there to something else, but we couldn't. We'd just have to keep going. Could take a chance on feed crops, but there's been a lot of demand in this war to make explosives, and so on. That'll all be gone in a few years. (Taking the United States as a whole, do you think there'd be a reduction in wheat production?) Takin' it as a whole--might be, but it wouldn't come from the West.

Why do you think so?

In the East they can grow other things. They'd do better in something besides wheat if they could raise it.

What would you do if the price of wheat went to 90 cents and the prices of things you buy and farm wages stayed about where they are now?

I'd have to keep on raising what I do now because I'm on a rented place, but if I was on my own place, I'd cut. Raise more stock. We can do that in here. Got some good grass.

Is there anything the Government should do to help you reduce your cost of production?

Don't see there's anything the Government could do. Might reduce machinery so we could buy it.

We've been talking about what may happen after the war. Now we are interested in finding out how farmers think the wheat situation looks for the first two years immediately following the war. As far as you know, is the Government going to do anything to try to support wheat prices in the first two years after the war?

It's my understanding Roosevelt was supposed to have some program.

What is it going to do?

Like the old AAA. (Anything else?) That's all I know about.

There is a law now that wheat prices must be held to at least 90 percent of parity for two years after the end of the war. This doesn't mean any set price guarantee but the Government will try not to let wheat prices go down any more than other prices. Acreage restrictions are maintained in this law. What do you think of this law? Do you think it is going to be good or bad for farmers?

They got to fork out the money to enforce that. (Do you think that sounds like a good or a bad law?) Well, it's hard to say. I remember back in the thirties been a lot of people go broke if it hadn't been for the Government. We'd a had to quit. That's all there is to it. I hate to see that come back again; it ran us into an awful debt. Be the same thing with this--it costs money to do these things. I don't think it would hurt to try it without all these things--just see how we make out.

What do you think would have happened to wheat prices in the first two years after the war if they hadn't passed this law?

Things would go on like now--might go down in a little while. When Russia gets to producing it'll go down to 25 cents. There's another thing. If the Government supports the price, we'll have a surplus. That'll ruin us. The Government will have to take the loss on all that.

What effect do you think this law will have on the amount of wheat that will be produced in the United States for the two years after the war?

The big guys, they'll never quit. They'll just buy up the tractors and farms everywhere. Don't think the price bothers them so much. They'll produce more maybe--they keep gettin' more to produce with.



How about here on your farm--do you think you will grow as much more, or less wheat in the first two years after the war as you are now?

As long as I rent, I'll produce what I raise now. That's how the landlord wants it--all the wheat he can get.

Do you think that the law we have been talking about will affect your production plans for wheat?

Well, it won't, no, as long as I rent. I get as much wheat in as I can. (You say as long as you rent. Are you planning to own a farm?) No--not for quite some time. (Well, suppose you did own this farm, would the law affect your production plans?) I'd have to follow along with the best of 'em. Just make as much money as I could. And while the Government supports wheat, that's where to make it.

We've been talking about the production side of the picture for wheat in the first two years after the war, the period in which the price support law is in effect. Now do you think the demand for wheat in this period--the first two years after the war--will be about the same, larger, or smaller, than it is now?

Well, we got the problem of feeding Europe. They'll look to us for a good share of it. But how are countries like France and all going to pay for it? Who's going to take the loss? I don't know whether we should or not. I think we ought to sell it to Europe. Live on this lend-lease. That way we'll get a little something for it--she'll use what we got because they're all tore up. Won't be long, though, before she'll be on her own, and Russia and all those countries. They can raise wheat a lot cheaper than here. (How long do you think it'll take Russia and all those countries to raise wheat to sell?) I don't know, but the talk is we can't count on any foreign markets much over a year. (Then how do you think the demand will be in the second year?) It'll let up--start to drop. (Below what it is now?) Oh, sure. I don't think it'll ever be higher than now.

What do you think the demand in this country will be like?

Well, what cuts our market here is unemployment. Got to prevent that more than anything. (In the first two years after the war--what do you think the employment situation will be?) It'll be all right for two, maybe four years because we got a lot to catch up on, but after that we'll have a depression unless we can figure some way around it.

Looking at the whole picture for wheat, the production and demand sides--do you think there will be a surplus produced in the period that this law is in effect--that is, the first two years after the war?

Don't seem to me like we'd have one the first year and not bad the second. I'm not concerned over those first two years much.

Suppose surplus wheat is produced in this period, do you think the Government should try to do something about it or not?

Well, what could they do? (Should they try to do anything at all?) That's been puzzling me. I don't know what to say. I don't think we help much. (How do you mean?) When the Government cut production the last time it didn't help much. You know the farmer, he's an individualist--he likes to do his own running. But we'd just raise too much wheat. Should be cooperation of farmers. Need to have that, so if we did raise too blame much then the farmers could cut it themselves. But by God that won't work, 'cause farmers won't do anything. You pretty near have to have government control.

If the Government does try to do something about a surplus of wheat, would be produced than could be used. What do you think of this?

Ill right if it's done fair.

Why do you think so?

Well, here's what. Cut the big man and only let a man produce so many acres. Get it back to individual farms again. Don't have one man farming so much land. I know the argument is big farmers can farm better, but it's far as I know farmers doing a living job, that's better, or they'll go to the cities and there you go with farming.

Another way would be to have no cutback on production and, if there is ways they could. What do you think of this?

I think it's cheaper if the Government would force acreage restrictions. That would be the best way to clamp down on the big man. But there it is. The Government can't do anything to the farmer as a whole without hurting somebody. But I don't think their other plan--they'll just raise more.

If the Government buys surplus wheat, what do you think they should do with this wheat?

If you want to slice wheat down, you have to cut the big guys. Maybe they ought to store it and sell it back to the farmer so he can fill



in on his lean years. (What do you mean--sell it back?) Well, sell it back. (At what kind of price?) At the prevailing price of that year. They might not get what they paid for it that way, but be better than dumping it. Only other way is for them to compete with us--and that's not right at all.

What do you think of the idea of the Government selling it below cost for feed to farmers in parts of the country where they are short of feed?

That's sort of the ever-normal granary idea. That's all right. That would help me, I know, if I was in a bad spot. They got to sell it below cost, though.

Why do you think it's all right?

Well, it helps people keep on their feet. Seems like that's the best thing to do, otherwise those guys have to go to the cities.

If the Government does try to decrease production of wheat, how do you think it ought to go about it?

Well, just set an amount of wheat you can raise, and over that they got to pay to grow it or have their acres controlled. (How much do you think it would be fair to grow so you don't pay a fine or have acreage control?) May be 200 acres or 300. But above that--I say control 'em.

What do you think of the idea of asking farmers in all areas of the country to cut their wheat acreage by a certain percent?

I say do that in the Wheat Belt only, and cut a man down there like I said. Put some of this submarginal land back to grass and take it out of production.

Would you be willing to cut your wheat acreage by one-fourth in order to get the price which this 90 percent of parity law guarantees?

I might, but my landlord wouldn't.

If the Government paid farmers to put part of their wheat acreage into grass or feed crops, do you think this would decrease wheat production?

I don't believe it would cut wheat any, because no one's equipped to handle row crops, and if they were, what do you do with the crop? Have to have a new market. Even then, these guys like wheat. This payin' people idea--like the old AAA payments--they forced more tenants off the land to collect allotments than I ever saw. That





### 3. A DIVERSIFIED FARMER IN OHIO

"If the Government is gonna control all that stuff, bye and bye they'll own it....I just think the Government ought to get out of where it don't belong!"

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THIS FARMER owns and operates 160 acres in Seneca County, Ohio. He gave his total cash farm income in 1944 as \$5,000, his main source of income being hogs. He had 36 acres in wheat, from which his total cash income was \$850. He has had a grammar-school education.

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In general, do you think the wheat situation after the war is all over will be good or bad?

If it's anything like the other time, it'll be low. Course, prices didn't go so high this time, but the thing is you never can tell. The price of wheat depends on what other prices do. In the other war when it was all over, certain things came away down and others stayed up there--like machinery. That's what bunged us all up. Maybe that won't happen this time. That's what they claim, anyway. Everybody's made money in this war but me. Stands to reason somebody has to have some. They all want their irons fixed and so on. But I just can't see why things'll be so bad this time.

Do you think the Government should do anything to support wheat prices after the war?

I don't know how to answer that. (What's the trouble?) Well, I say if the Government is gonna control all this stuff, well, bye and bye they'll own it. That's like what they're doin' in these other countries. Why, I read if the OPA would get out of this meat business there'd be plenty for anyone that wanted it. I read that now, I don't know if it's true. But it sounds right. I tell you I wouldn't want to have to figure that out, 'cause when you help one you hurt another and where are you? Only I just think the Government ought to get out of where it don't belong. Things is gettin' in a worse mess every day. The Government ought to try leavin' it all alone and just see what happens. It can't be no worse, seems like to me.

In the long run do you think the Government ought to support farm prices or would you rather see them let farm prices alone?

That's just the same thing. I don't care if it's wheat or what it

Why do you feel that way?

If the Government runs all this stuff, they'll pretty soon own the land and we'll have to give up for it. The Government will say, "We'll give it to take what they give us for it." I think if the Government would let it rule itself a little bit, it'd be better.

If wheat goes to a dollar a bushel and I can't afford to raise 40 acres of it, well then, I just got to quit. The same'll hold true for a lot of other fellas, and pretty soon the price'll come back up.

What would you do if the price of wheat went to 90 cents and the prices of things farmers buy and farm wages stayed about where they are now?

I'd quit raisin' so much.

What would you do with your land then?

Leave it lay, unless I could put in somethin' else, like beans. But I don't never plant them anyway 'cause I ain't got the right ground for 'em. Maybe oats or somethin' like that.

Is the Government doing anything now that you know of to support the price of wheat?

I think the Government price of wheat is \$1.70, but I don't know if they support it at that.

How about after the war--have you heard whether or not the Government is planning to support wheat prices then?

I ain't heard of nothin'.

There is a law now that wheat prices must be held to at least 90 percent of parity for two years after the end of the war. This doesn't mean any set price guarantee, but the Government will try not to let wheat prices go down any more than other prices. Acreage restrictions are not mentioned in this law. What do you think of this law? Do you think it will be good or bad for farmers?

If the Government has a price on all this stuff, he'll own it. After all, we're the Government. That's just more of this regulatin' of the prices, and after that comes fellas out here to tell us how to run our business. I don't like it and I'm not for it.





The people are all here and they want to eat. I imagine be just like it is now.

Looking at the whole picture for wheat, the production and demand sides--do you think there will be a surplus produced in the period that this law is in effect--that is, the first two years after the war?

I don't see why we got to have a surplus with all them people needin' food so bad. Unless Europe can't buy, and that I got no way of knowin'.

Suppose surplus wheat is produced in this period, do you think the Government should try to do something about it or not?

I got fined once for raisin' too much wheat and I didn't think it was fair then and I don't think it's fair now. They didn't tell me either if I'd keep it off the market it was all right. I could have fed it to my hogs if I'd known that. But they didn't tell me that. So I paid my \$60 and then I could sell the rest. I think that's just some kids' trick playin' around. (Do you think there's any way in which the Government should try to do something about a surplus or not?) There ain't no way but that. It always comes round to it. I just think those things are a whole lot better left to themselves. When we got a surplus we got a low price and then we cut down anyway.

If the Government does try to do something about a surplus of wheat it could take measures to hold down production so that no more wheat would be produced than could be used. What do you think of this?

Be the same thing. They'd fine me if I overplanted. The Government ain't got no right to tell us like that what we can or can't raise. If they do tell me, they'll pretty soon own it. That's not what this country is for, as I understood it.

Another way would be to have no cutback on production and, if there is a surplus, buy it up at a support price and dispose of it in whatever ways they could. What do you think of this?

He's done that before. They had about 20 bins down here to the fair grounds and they held it all right, but no one knows whatever they done with it. (What do you think of this system?) Well, it's no good. What's the Government to do with it? It'll all spoil bye and bye, and it's a wasteful way to do. And where's he to get the money to buy it like that? I think myself that's worse than nothin' 'cause he's just askin' for a surplus that way. (Why?) Well, he says plant all you want and we'll buy up what you can't sell. If he wants a crop, that's how to get it.



In the two years we have this price guarantee, which way of handling surplus wheat do you think better--production control or government purchase and distribution of surpluses?

I'd as lief have 'em eliminate the acres because then maybe I can get a hay crop in or something. Least it ain't gonna cost the money the other way would. But I want you to put it down that I don't favor either way.

If the Government buys surplus wheat, what do you think they should do with this wheat?

I don't know. A surplus piles up and up and nobody wants it or it wouldn't be there. (Question repeated.) That's what I don't know. I can't imagine. I don't even know what they done with it this other time, unless they made alcohol. They was haulin' it into the bins and then they took it out. I don't know. I couldn't answer that at all.

What do you think of the idea of the Government selling it below cost for feed to farmers in parts of the country where they are short of feed?

Then they're robbin' me to pay the other fella. And the people-- that's us --we pay for it. That's no good.

If the Government does try to decrease production of wheat, how do you think it ought to go about it?

I surely got no ideas on that at all. But cut out the fines, I'd say. When you're gonna cut the acres there's not much you can do except to cut 'em. (How?) How? Well, just tell everybody he's got to cut. (How are you going to figure out how much everybody cuts?) That's it. That's where it goes sour every time. Maybe it wouldn't be bad to have every county figure what they had to cut and then try to see if the farmers wouldn't each volunteer to cut the amount they thought they could. Be a lot cheaper, too. Why, last time they had three fellas out here measurin' my fields, and I asked 'em if the Government was payin' 'em to walk. They said yes they was, and as long as they got paid, they'd keep right on a walkin'. That's how it went.

What do you think of the idea of asking farmers in all areas of the country to cut their wheat acreage by a certain percent?

I don't think anything of it. I don't like it.

You know they did something like that before. What improvements could be made over the way it was handled then?

Well, just what I said before. Cut out them fines and see if the farmers wouldn't step up themselves.

Would you be willing to cut your wheat acreage by one-fourth in order to get the price which this 90 percent of parity law guarantees?

Well, one thing, we'd all have our throats cut together. Some fellas that isn't farmin' much, why one-fourth ain't much to them, but take these big fellas, why it'd really mean a lot to them. Be a hell of a loss the country over, but if you haven't got no use for the stuff, why I don't know. I don't like the idea at all. (Laughter repeated.) I pretty near have to if everyone else did, but I wouldn't like it none.



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#### 4. A LARGE-SCALE WHEAT FARMER IN TEXAS

"I think they ought to support (wheat prices) as long as they're going to hold tariff up and subsidize shipping....It wouldn't be good to go on having one group subsidized, and others

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THIS INTERVIEW was with a farmer in Ochiltree County, Texas, who operates 3,000 acres, of which he owns part and rents part. In 1944 he operated 1,600 acres; he gave the total cash income from the farm in that year as \$30,000, \$22,000 being from wheat. This farmer has had a college education.

How does the wheat situation for after the war look to you? In general, do you think it will be good or bad?

It doesn't look too good. The world over can raise more wheat than we can consume--unless we find new uses for it.

Do you think the Government should do anything to support wheat prices after the war?

Yes, I do.

Why?

As long as industry is in a protected bracket--they've been in ever since Alexander Hamilton started the protective tariff--the farmer some way has got to be protected. Our frontiers are gone, and when times are tough we can't move out farther west and get new land like they could when my daddy was a boy....I don't just know what type of requirement would be best. Some things about the farm program I didn't like. (What things didn't you like about it?) One thing--and I'm guilty myself, because I'm farming more--before the program went into effect this country had houses pretty well all over; we didn't have any of our Main Street farmers or our suitcase farmers. But when the Government came along with that program,

every landlord took his farm back and hogged it in, if he could get the payments. They kept pushing up the rent till they pushed the tenants off, and when the landlord took over the tenants were set out on WPA.

It was that allotment money that did it. I think people are entitled to some allotment money for cooperating, if they could figure out a family-sized farm to make a decent living and when farmers get too big make it so they don't pay them anything. I've been guilty of farming too much for a good while, but I know it isn't right. It roots half the people of the country off. It puts the money in the hands of the Main Street farmers. They ought to have to live on that farm before they get anything, or else have to rent it out--not live away and run a piece....

Do you think the Government should continue to support wheat prices indefinitely after the war, or should it gradually reduce support prices and eventually let supply and demand set the price of wheat?

That supply and demand I think is a lot of hooley. You can talk about supply and demand all you want to. It would work if the machinery companies and those outfits would work by it too. Then it would be all right for agriculture to work by it. But they curtail production, and therefore supply and demand won't work in farming. I know they tried to poke it down our throats in college, but I don't believe it. I don't think the Government can support the price of wheat, or cotton either, and just turn us loose to produce what we want to. A lot gripe about the Government, but we needed someone to tell us what to do.

Do you think that such a gradual reduction on support prices for wheat would be good or bad for the country as a whole?

I think they ought to support it as long as they're going to hold tariff up and subsidize shipping lines. You never hear anything except about farmers getting a subsidy, but that's not true at all. The railroads are guaranteed at six percent. If they'll guarantee me six percent on my investment, I don't care if they support the price or not! It wouldn't be good to go on having one group subsidized and others not, and let supply and demand take over here and not there.

Suppose that, after they took the price support away, wheat went down to a price that the price of the other grains is at. How much wheat would you grow as they are now. What do you think would be the amount of wheat produced in the United States?

It'd be just as rough as it could get. I tell you what I think would happen if the price goes down below parity--most farmers



would try to sow everything they had to get a big crop and eventually it would catch up to them. Their machinery would play out and their credit would die out, and eventually we'd be back where we were before. And in this country where you have a blow hazard there'd be less blow control because we couldn't afford it, and there would be no chance of raising a crop after a while.

What would you do if the price of wheat went to 90 cents and the prices of things you buy and farm wages stayed about where they are now?

I'd go more to grazing. But when wheat gets up to where it is now, you can't afford to graze this land where it's plowed out.

How could you reduce the cost of producing wheat on your farm so that you could raise it for 90 cents a bushel?

I don't know how you would. The only think I know is for machinery costs to be reduced. Labor is high, and it won't be always. But I'd like to see labor continue with these wages, because they can consume so much more.

Is there anything the Government should do to help you reduce your cost of production?

I think big business ought to have more regulation. I'm not against individual enterprise, but when the rich get richer and the poor get poorer, something's wrong....Government couldn't get business to do a thing even for this war until they gave them cost plus 10 percent. Big business is bigger than the Government....When they get to where they're bigger than the Government, then they ought to be taken out of business where they can tell the Government what to do. I admire Mexico's spunk for taking over our oil industries there before they got that control. That group of people has been protected ever since the beginning of the Government, and money was on that side....and they've been getting more protection all the time. Business has been riding us too hard.

We've been talking about what may happen after the war. Now we are interested in finding out how farmers think the wheat situation looks for the first two years immediately following the war. As far as you know, is the Government going to do anything to try to support wheat prices in the first two years after the war?

They're supposed to be held up two years, but there's a big fight over that right now.

Does that mean that wheat prices will stay where they are now?

No, it's to be in the same relative proportion as it is now. Be 90 percent of parity, and if other prices go down, it will.

What do you think of this law? Do you think it is going to be good or bad for farmers?

Too big a problem for me, but I don't think such a government set-up would cost too much for the benefits received. But I think if we're entitled to 90 percent, we're entitled to 100 percent.. I realize there's been lots of fight against it, and that's why it came out 90 instead of 100, but I know that even as it is it will be a good thing for farmers and I think it will be a good thing for the nation over.

Why do you think so?

Through history, we know that when farmers and labor prosper, the rest of the nation prospered. I don't know which comes first, but the two go hand in hand. I think a reason a lot of fight has gone on about it is that organized industry--organized money capital--don't want farmers to starve to death, but they don't want them to get too independent, either. They get too wise and they're not too easily led around. And farmers, because of the nature of their business, can't be as closely organized as our manufacturers or merchants in town. I don't blame them for organizing and looking after their own interests, but I don't like it when they try to take away what we know is ours.

What do you think would have happened to wheat prices in the first two years after the war if they hadn't passed this law?

Should the law fall through and we fail to loan money to people who need wheat and we have to fall back on domestic consumption--labor will be in the same boat if they fail to loan money to countries to buy what they make--we'll go back to '32-'33. We've got our Senate to contend with and it's pretty conservative. If they don't swap trade to fix those people over there by some means to buy what we produce, and let these prices go, we'll be in an awful fix. As far as wheat goes, I don't think domestic consumption is four billion. Be two to three billion surplus a year on the average.

(Interviewer's note: This respondent could not consider the possibility of foreign trade without a price support. He thinks if we don't have the latter, we won't have the former either, because a conservative Senate which would do away with the support law would also fail to make necessary provisions for a healthy foreign trade. Therefore he thinks that without support law wheat prices would fall.)



What effect do you think this law will have on the amount of wheat that will be produced in the United States for the two years after the war?

It'll force most of them to plant it all to wheat if the Government doesn't come in. They'll just plant all of it if there isn't any curtailment--in hope of getting a good crop.

How about here on your farm--do you think you will produce as much, more, or less wheat in the first two years after the war as you are now?

I practice fallow anyway regardless, and it'll be about the same. But on the rented land there won't be any landlord allow you to leave out any at all. I can't leave any out now, and I couldn't with that support on.

Why are you planning that way?

I just believe in thinking ahead for this land. My daddy raised 12 children and they've all got college degrees and he did it on wheat. You have to follow good practices to do that.

Do you think that the law we have been talking about will affect your production plans for wheat?

I expect it will, after this war is over. You can't afford to raise cows on \$50-60 land that's already plowed up when you know you can get good prices for wheat.

We've been talking about the production side of the picture for wheat in the first two years after the war, the period in which the price support law is in effect. Now do you think the demand for wheat in this period--the first two years after the war--will be about the same, larger, or smaller, than it is now?

It could be greater if there was some way to get it to countries that need it. Until Russia and those countries get on their feet for their own. I don't know what we'd do unless we pay it ourselves. We'd be better off as a nation if we'd pay it and help them out, because it might keep kids like mine from fighting. (What do you really expect?) I'm dubious of what that Senate will do. They're naturally conservative and I'm just afraid they won't let us go ahead when this is over, and those countries won't be able to buy from us.

What do you think the demand in this country will be like?

A lot of it depends on what manufacturers do. Even if they convert and go into rather full production, I'd think there'll be a drop,

because I don't believe our domestic consumption of manufactured articles will be great enough to employ everyone that's employed now. There's some families where everyone is working today. When they cut the buying power, you're going to cut demand. I don't believe there will be as many working.

Looking at the whole picture for wheat, the production and demand sides--do you think there will be a surplus produced in the period that this law is in effect--that is, the first two years after the war?

I'm of the opinion there will be if they don't curtail production. Be enough for the bottom to fall out if they quit the support price.

Suppose surplus wheat is produced in this period, do you think the Government should try to do something about it or not?

Absolutely.

If the Government does try to do something about a surplus of wheat, it would have measures to hold down production so that no more wheat would be produced than could be used. What do you think of this?

I think curtailing production is all right, and I'll tell you why I think so. Those of us that farm ought to feel it's our duty to keep this land in good shape. This talk of raising a certain amount for good domestic prices and raising all the rest you want to at the world price-- Some are saying they want to have a two-price system. But we're not treating posterity right when we use up this land to produce stuff that won't pay it's own way and have to give it away. If they'd make curtailment so that it was worked out that where diversification is possible they won't raise wheat -- A lot tried to force us to diversify in this country. Here it's impossible to diversify. In some places you can.

Another thing, a lot have got so rich here lately they won't carry out practice (soil conservation) payments.

I think we're going to have to curtail production to hold prices up and there's going to have to be some incentive and some penalty to force it (curtailment). Not a bit of use in letting a few people try to better things and let the neighbors carry no load at all. They might plant all they could when everyone else outs.

Another way would be to have no cutback on production and, if there is a surplus, buy it up at a support price and dispose of it in whatever ways they could. What do you think of this?

Looks to me foolish for the sake of the land alone. (Any other reasons?) Well, isn't that enough?



If the Government has surplus wheat, what do you think they should do with this wheat

Ought to do somebody some good with it. They'd have to dispose of it; it deteriorates after a number of years. Better give it to some nation if they can't sell it. But I don't see any use of getting stuck with a lot of it. That can be prevented.

What do you think of the idea of the Government selling it below cost for feed to farmers in parts of the country where they are short of feed?

That would beat letting it rot. I could sell barley and buy wheat there one time cheaper than I could feed barley. Doesn't make a lot of sense to get such a surplus.

If the Government does try to decrease production of wheat, how do you think it ought to go about it?

I'll tell you one thing that ought to happen--help farmers progress more. But there's never been anyone in our country to find out what's going on in practice, and I think local men ought to be consulted like this more before programs are put into effect. They start from the top down and not from the bottom up. Now you can take a lot of ideas from a bunch of fellows and you get a lot of different ones, but you add them up and they're pretty near the same and you could work something out of them. Of course I realize this whole thing is a new undertaking. (Respondent means democracy.) No nation in the world has ever tried it before and we've done a better job than any other country.

(For answer to question, see page 24, and below.)

Would you be willing to cut your wheat acreage by one-fourth in order to get the price which this 90 percent of parity law guarantees?

I'm curtailing mine voluntarily more than that on my own land. It wouldn't hurt to curtail one-third or even one-half in this country. Should be doing the same on rented land. But it isn't right to cut a fellow where he is already following good practices. They ought not to let that get by. I think curtailment should be made from total possible wheat acreage.

If the Government paid farmers to put part of their wheat acreage into grass or feed crops, do you think this would decrease wheat production?

I'll speak from my own standpoint. I'm not a feed grower, and as a rule feed in this country don't grow too good. The last two





5. A CORN GROWER IN OHIO

"They shouldn't tell us what to do, they ain't got the right. I think the Government ought to stay out of things... (but) If things get so bad they look like we're gonna drop back to 40-cent wheat, then I think we got to do something."

THIS FARMER is part-owner and operator of 235 acres, including about 75 acres in wheat, in Seneca County, Ohio. He gave the total cash income from the farm for 1944 as \$12,000, about \$2,000 of it from wheat, most of it from corn. He has had a grammar-school education.

In general, do you think the wheat situation after the war is all over will be good or bad?

Well, as far as the situation looks we're gonna get good prices for wheat for a while, I think, till the other countries gets on their feet, then we'll get it like we did in the other war. (How long will it take for the other countries to get on their feet?) A couple of years. Just about two years be enough to get 'em through.

Do you think the Government should do anything to support wheat prices after the war?

Well, you want me to tell you what I really think? (Absolutely.) They shouldn't tell us what to do, and as far as that goes, they ain't got the right. I think the Government ought to stay out of things--quit tellin' us how much machinery and gas we need. We know all that better than they do, and they've just made one heck of a mess of the whole thing.

In the long run, do you think the Government ought to support farm prices or would you rather see them let farm prices alone?

I'll tell you what's happened in the last 12 years. They carried out that AAA program to raise the price of wheat and all it did was give a bunch of guys jobs and it took the war to raise the price.

I say let the farmers raise what they can under the conditions and give 'em a decent price. (How do you mean, give 'em a decent price?) Keep the price at a dollar to a dollar fifty a bushel. (Who keeps the price at a dollar to a dollar fifty?) Well, when it gets below that, then farmers got to feed it or quit raisin' it, but the Government hadn't ought to tell 'em. They'd ought to decide that for themselves. They would, too. No one wants to see things get like they did before. That'd help to knock out some of these salaried guys we got to pay big salaries to. Lower the taxes all around. I tell you, when they started AAA, they went to killin' all the little pigs and now they're a-hollerin' for 'em.

What would you do if the price of wheat went to 90 cents and the prices of things farmers buy and farm wages stayed about where they are now?

I'd quit farmin' so much. Just cut down a little.

What would you do with your land then?

Put it in grass. Let the weeds grow.

Is the Government doing anything now that you know of to support the price of wheat?

The last couple of years they had this lend-lease and that's helped out. (Anything else?) Not that I know of.

How about after the war--have you heard whether or not the Government is planning to support wheat prices then?

Not that I heard.

There is a law now that wheat prices must be held to at least 90 percent of parity for two years after the end of the war. This doesn't mean any set price guarantee, but the Government will try not to let wheat prices go down any more than other prices. Acreage restrictions are not mentioned in this law. What do you think of this law? Do you think it will be good or bad for farmers?

It'll be a good thing if they cut out about 99 percent of these AAA guys.

Why do you think so?

If they guarantee wheat at 90 percent of parity, it won't be so bad. (Why not?) Give you something to look forward to, you'll be sure of what you'll get. But as soon as some of these fellas go plum crazy and plant twice what they'd ought to, why that might



not be so good. I guess some people be crazy enough to do that too, but I still say let that take care of itself. I think most people have enough know now that they won't do that.

What do you think would have happened to wheat prices in the first two years after the war if they hadn't passed this law?

It would have come down when the demand dropped, but I think in that two years you're talkin' about, it'd been all right no matter what the Government done. We got to feed these other countries till they get back on their feet.

How about here on your farm--do you think you will produce as much, more, or less wheat in the first two years after the war as you are now?

About the same.

Why are you planning that way?

That fits into my farmin' program like I want it. I got a rotation here.

Now that you know about this law do you think it will affect your production plans for wheat?

No ma'am.

Why won't it affect your plans?

Because I believe in keeping it down to where it fits the kind of farmin' you're doin'. I need all that I raise, and I just ain't got the room to give over to any more wheat.

We've been talking about the production side of the picture for wheat in the first two years after the war, the period in which the price support law is in effect. Now, do you think the demand for wheat in this period--the first two years after the war--will be about the same, larger, or smaller, than it is now?

Be about like it is now.

What do you think the foreign demand will be like in that period?

The same.

What do you think the demand in this country will be like?



I don't know. I'm against it, and I haven't thought about it like this. I don't know what to answer you on that.

Another way would be to have no cutback on production and, if there is a surplus, buy it up at a support price and dispose of it in whatever ways they could. What do you think of this?

That there would be better, 'cause it's a lot more economical. (Why?) Not near so many salaried men in the jobs. I like this way better--if they could keep down production. (There's absolutely no acreage control in this second way.) Well, I see. I don't know then. Seems like farmers'd just raise all they could and then what's the Government gonna do with it? I think at that the cut in the acres'd be better with one man to the township. To tell you the truth, I'm not in favor of any of it.

Why do you prefer that?

I think it costs less to operate.

If the Government buys surplus wheat, what do you think they should do with this wheat?

Sell it for feed.

What do you think of the idea of the Government selling it below cost for feed to farmers in parts of the country where they are short of feed?

I don't believe in that. It just raises our taxes by that much more.

If the Government does try to decrease production of wheat, how do you think it ought to go about it?

Put one man to the township. But someone that's reliable and has made a success at farmin' and has good judgment. Then he can tell us how things are and we'd ought to cooperate willingly. (Suppose he tells you there's too much wheat and you all got to cut down, how's he going to do it?) Just tell everyone to cut down a certain amount accordin' to what he raises.

What do you think of the idea of asking farmers in all areas of the country to cut their wheat acreage by a certain percent?

That's in proportion to the size of the wheat they raise. That's fair enough.

You know they did something like that before. What improvements could be made over the way it was handled then?



Cut out about 90 percent of the men on the jobs and have one man to handle it in each township. Be the best way to do.

Would you be willing to cut your wheat acreage by one-fourth in order to get the price which this 90 percent of parity law guarantees?

Yes I would. You bet. I already done that anyway.

6. A DIVERSIFIED FARMER (RENTER) IN NEBRASKA

"The old system of supply and demand wouldn't work....  
I believe in price control and acreage control. We've  
just got to have it to continue farming."

HERE a Gage County, Nebraska farmer, operating 300 rented acres, is interviewed. About a third of his acreage is in wheat. He gave his total cash farm income for 1944 as \$3,000, of which \$500 came from wheat, his main source of income being corn. This man's formal education consists of a few years of grammar school.

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How does the wheat situation for after the war look to you? In general, do you think it will be good or bad?

That will depend on the market. They claim there's a surplus now. If there is, there'll have to be one after the war. We raise here for diversified farming--there's not much money in wheat, especially for tenants. (Question repeated.) There'll be too much, unless the acreage is controlled. It will have to be controlled after the war.

Do you think the Government should do anything to support wheat prices after the war?

I'd like to see government control and support.

Why?

It'll have to be that way unless we want to go back to the old days when you made a little money one year and none the next. (What are the advantages of control?) It takes the gamble out of the wheat.

Do you think the Government should continue to support wheat prices indefinitely after the war or should it gradually reduce support prices and eventually let supply and demand set the price of wheat?

No, that's going backwards. We got to go forward. It's got to be controlled to support the price.



Do you think that such a gradual reduction on support prices for wheat would be good or bad for the country as a whole?

It wouldn't work, in my opinion. The old system of supply and demand wouldn't work. It was a handicap to farmers. The acreage varied too much. If they got a little profit one year, they'd go to extremes the next. It's got to be controlled. It's better to have a little every year than a big profit one year and none for the next ten. You have oversupply one year, and then the next the supply is short due to low acreage. I think we should go forward. A lot don't like it, but I think we should be broad-minded. Or I don't know--maybe I'm the one that's narrow-minded!

Suppose that, after they took the price support away, wheat went down to 90 cents and the prices of things farmers buy and farm wages stayed about the same as they are now. What do you think would happen to the amount of wheat produced in the United States?

Well, the acreage would drop, of course, and maybe there'd be a serious shortage for a year or two, but the next year, everybody would grow wheat. Around here we don't have much effect on the wheat market, because we don't grow enough. We grow it because it's a good crop to change the land, that's all.

Why do you think the acreage would drop?

No profit; they won't all stop, but some will say "There's no money in wheat, I think I've got a better chance with corn." Wheat is an expensive crop to grow.

What would you do if the price of wheat went to 90 cents and the prices of things you buy and farm wages stayed about where they are now?

I'd have to go to other crops more, of course; I would feel that was the thing to do. But that works different ways. A deep-thinking man will think that that's just the time to put out acreage because a lot of them are going to drop out. But then if too many think like he does, it doesn't work. Sometimes it works out.

How could you reduce the cost of producing wheat on your farm so that you could raise it for 90 cents a bushel?

Just build up the land and produce more bushels per acre. We've got a cheap system already, with the combine.

Is there anything the Government should do to help you reduce your cost of production?



This soil conservation is a great thing. It's expensive for the Government, but in the long run it is a good thing. In my opinion, we must get back to more land owned, and less tenants. Tenants won't build up the land.

We've been talking about what may happen after the war. Now we are interested in finding out how farmers think the wheat situation looks for the first two years immediately following the war. As far as you know, is the Government going to do anything to try to support wheat prices in the first two years after the war?

I haven't heard anything.

There is a law now that wheat prices must be held to at least 90 percent of parity for two years after the end of the war. This doesn't mean any set price guarantee but the Government will try not to let wheat prices go down any more than other prices. Acreage restrictions are not mentioned in this law. What do you think of this law? Do you think it is going to be good or bad for farmers?

That's all right. That's a good law. If they don't change their mind it will be all right. They have ways of getting around things, though.

Why do you think it's a good law?

It gives us security, something to work on.

What do you think would have happened to wheat prices in the first two years after the war if they hadn't passed this law?

Well, the first two years may not be critical years. The price would stay up if they do like they say they are going to and feed those foreign countries. I don't see how they can--but if they do, prices will stay up. I don't know what security the United States will have--I'm afraid they'll be the goat this time, like they were the last. (How long do you expect that foreign demand will keep the price up?) Oh, one to two years. Of course I think that as soon as the war is over we're going to forget about those other countries. We'll have all our surplus on hand, if we continue raisin' wheat like we are doin' now.

What effect do you think this law will have on the amount of wheat that will be produced in the United States for the two years after the war?

I don't believe it will be a big thing. They will support other prices accordingly--they can't support wheat without supporting



cotton, because that's the South's crop; they'll support all prices, then they'll have to control acreage. (Why would they have to do that?) They would make a terrible surplus! What would they do with all the grain, if they didn't control acreage?

How about here on your farm--do you think you will produce as much, more, or less wheat in the first two years after the war as you are now?

I'll produce about the same, around a hundred acres a year.

Why are you planning that way?

For diversified farming. (How do you decide how much to plant?) Price has a good deal to do with it. If the price is good one summer, the next fall people put out a bigger acreage. Another thing--if something happens to the corn, hail or drought, then there'll be a larger acreage of wheat, if the price is pretty good. But price controls wheat acreage, unless it's controlled by the Government. If we get a decent price for all our grain, there must be acreage control, because the surplus can't all be used. I believe in price control and acreage control. We've just got to have it to continue farming, with all the machinery we have today. It used to be different with horses.

Now that you know about this law do you think it will affect your production plans for wheat?

No, it wouldn't; well, yes in a way, of course. If I should watch the market trends, and if I'm told there's a big surplus I'd cut down; I'd say to myself, I'm not going to raise it for 50 cents a bushel at a cost of 75 cents. But I'd go ahead if I knew the price was going to stay up; I'd plant as much as I was allowed, or as much as the land would stand if there weren't any restrictions.

We've been talking about the production side of the picture for wheat in the first two years after the war, the period in which the price support law is in effect. Now do you think the demand for wheat in this period--the first two years after the war--will be about the same, larger, or smaller, than it is now?

I would think there would be foreign demand on wheat, but the local demand won't be as great. (Why not?) Well, now, I shouldn't say that. The present demand is foreign. But there's the Army; it takes more to feed men when they are in the Army than when they are civilians; so it would fall off some. But it depends on work. I was just reading an article the other day, about how every man after the war should have a job. If so, consumption will be as great as